

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in light of the following discussion and in view of the present amendment, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-9 are pending in the present application, and claims 1, 2, 6 and 7 are amended by the present amendment.

Rejections under 35 USC § 102 and § 103

Claims 1, 2 and 5-8 were rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as unpatentable over US patent no. 5,166,829 to Iizuka. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Amended independent claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, “a lens frame...including...a guide rib on an outer surface of said lens frame,” and “a substantially U-shaped recess inside said support barrel and extending in the optical axis direction.” Amended independent claim 1 further recites a “guide rod configured to be supported by said guide rib and to be received into said substantially U-shaped recess,” support for which is found in the originally-filed specification at least in FIGS. 14-16 and at page 51, lines 6-21.

In a non-limiting example, FIG. 14 shows a first sub-lens group frame 53 has a cylindrical shape and has two linear guide ribs 53a on its periphery at the opposite sides thereof. A guide bore 53b is formed in the guide rib 53a. A guide rod 59 is loosely

inserted (or moveably fitted) in the guide bore 53b. Also, a U-shaped recess 56r is provided on a gear holding ring 56 so as to receive the guide rod 59 and a spring 62 (see the specification at page 51, lines 6-21).

As an advantage, in a further non-limiting example, during assembly the first sub-lens group frame 53 can be attached by simply aligning the guide ribs 53a, which are arranged on the outside of the first sub-lens group frame 53 at two radially opposite positions, with the U-shaped recesses 56r on the gear holding ring 56 (see the specification at page 76, lines 6-19). Accordingly, such a structure facilitates assembly of the lens barrel.

In contrast, Iizuka in FIG. 1 only shows grooves 7c and 2c which are formed entirely within the perimeter of the lens holding frames 7 and 2, respectively. Further, Iizuka does not discuss or suggest “a guide rib on an outer surface of said lens frame,” “a substantially U-shaped recess inside said support barrel”, or “guide rod configured to be supported by said guide rib and to be received into said substantially U-shaped recess,” as recited in amended independent claim 1.

Accordingly, because Iizuka does not disclose each and every feature recited in independent claim 1, Applicants respectfully submit amended independent claim 1, and claims 2-9 depending therefrom, patentably distinguish over Iizuka.

Claims 3, 4 and 9 were rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as unpatentable over Iizuka. This rejection is also respectfully traversed.

As discussed, amended independent claim 1, and claims 3, 4 and 9 which depend on claim 1, are believed to patentably distinguish over Iizuka at least for the reasons noted above. Further, it is respectfully submitted even assuming *arguendo* that Iizuka could be modified as suggested in the outstanding Office Action, such a modification still would not disclose or suggest the features of amended independent claim 1 and claims 2-9 depending therefrom.

Amendments to the Claims

In addition, claims 1, 2 and 5-9 are amended for clarification and to correct minor informalities. It is believed no new matter is added.

Summary and Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is submitted that the present amendment is proper and that none of the references of record either taken alone or in any proper combination thereof, anticipate or render obvious the Applicants' invention as recited in each of claims 1-9. The applied references of record have been discussed and distinguished, while significant claimed features of the present invention have been pointed out.

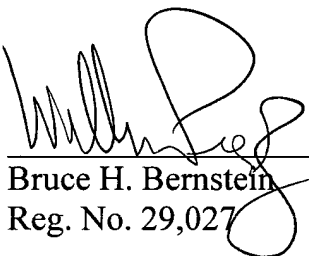
Accordingly, consideration of the present amendment, reconsideration of the outstanding Office Action, and allowance of the present application and all of the claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate.

Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attached thereto.

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so.

Should the Examiner have any questions concerning this Response, or the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
Hiroshi NOMURA


Bruce H. Bernstein
Reg. No. 29,027

October 19, 2004
GREENBLUM & BERNSTEIN, P.L.C.
1950 Roland Clarke Place
Reston, VA 20191
(703) 716-1191